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Summary record of the 5th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Abelian ..... (Armenia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations *(continued)*

Administrative arrangements for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (A/53/7/Add.3; A/C.5/52/25 and A/C.5/52/45)

1. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) introduced the report of the Secretary-General and the note by the Secretariat on the administrative arrangements for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (A/C.5/52/25 and A/C.5/52/45). He drew attention to the historical overview of the International Trade Centre (ITC) in paragraphs 3 to 6 of document A/C.5/52/25, which outlined the allocation of responsibilities between GATT (later WTO) and the United Nations and the problems resulting from the differences in the budgetary cycles and procedures of the two organizations.

2. When it had been established in 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) had asked to be more closely associated with the preparation of the Centre's budget. It had expressed a wish that the budget should be subject to the same procedures as its own budget and that it should cover a calendar year and be presented in Swiss francs. Following consultations between the secretariat of WTO, the International Trade Centre and the United Nations Secretariat, the latter had, in document A/C.5/52/25, put forward a series of proposals aimed at meeting the needs of the General Council of WTO and the General Assembly of the United Nations. A timetable had been proposed for the review and approval of the Centre's programme budget and related budget performance reports. WTO had expressed the view that the Secretariat's proposals did not fully address its concerns. The members of the Bureau of the Fifth Committee had met with the Chairman of the WTO Committee on the Budget, Finance and Administration in March 1998 and had agreed that the question of the Centre's financial arrangements should be brought to the Committee's attention.

3. Annexed to the second report, the note by the Secretariat (A/C.5/52/45), was detailed information on the current situation. ITC was financed equally by the United Nations and WTO. However, the WTO budget was presented in Swiss francs on an annual basis, while that of the United Nations was presented in United States dollars and covered a biennium. It was therefore difficult to reconcile the demands of the two organizations, but the Secretariat had endeavoured to do so in its report.

4. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/53/7/Add.3), said that the Advisory Committee had conducted an in-depth review of the question, during which it had met with representatives of ITC at Geneva, and with the Chairman and former Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration of the World Trade Organization. It had informed all its interlocutors of the content of its report; it was the Advisory Committee's hope that the proposals it was submitting to the Fifth Committee would meet with the agreement of WTO.

5. The procedure proposed by ACABQ was indicated in paragraph 11 of its report. Its main recommendation was that before ITC prepared its proposed programme budget, the United Nations General Assembly and the legislative machinery of WTO should approve the level of an outline in Swiss francs. That key change would meet the concerns of WTO, which would thus have a better picture of the level of appropriations required in Swiss francs. In the past, WTO had expressed concern that it had not been fully able to determine the equivalent in Swiss francs of a budget submitted in dollars. The budget outline would be submitted in May to ACABQ and to the General Assembly, and at the same time to WTO. It was in May that ITC submitted its budget outline in Swiss francs to WTO. ACABQ was proposing to extend that procedure to the United Nations. Budget proposals would be prepared between May and September. As was currently the case, a budget presented in dollars would be submitted to the General Assembly.

6. No other change was proposed. The Staff Regulations and Financial Regulations of the United Nations would continue to apply to ITC, whose activities would continue to be subject to oversight by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and whose accounts would still be audited by the Board of Auditors. Further, there would be no need to amend any United Nations regulation to be able to approve an outline presented in Swiss francs. In fact, the General Assembly, on the Advisory Committee's recommendation, already approved the International Computing Centre budget in Swiss francs.

7. The Advisory Committee had simply presented an outline of the procedure to be followed. It offered no indication of the structure or content of the budget outline, on which it would make further recommendations in May 1999, in the context of its consideration of the budget outline

prepared by ITC. Lastly, ACABQ was proposing nothing in its report that would affect the role of UNCTAD or its legislative machinery or the way in which programme priorities were formulated and approved for ITC.

8. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled the conditions in which the General Assembly, in resolution 2297 (XXII), had approved the accord between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on the establishment of ITC. The administrative and budgetary arrangements for the Centre had been approved in 1974 by the General Assembly, which alone was competent to change them. In that connection, he disagreed with the United Nations Secretariat which expressed the view, in paragraph 9 of document A/C.5/52/25, that the revisions of the budgetary arrangements called for by the General Council of WTO could be implemented through a series of administrative and technical measures.

9. In 1995, the Secretary-General had agreed with the Director-General of WTO to recommend to the responsible intergovernmental organs that the current arrangements governing the status of ITC should be confirmed, subject to the revisions of the budgetary arrangements requested by the General Council of WTO. The Group of 77 and China wished to express their concern in that connection and to underline the role of UNCTAD in the operation of the Centre. Moreover, they regretted the delay in bringing the matter to the attention of the General Assembly.

10. The budgetary procedure proposed by the General Council of WTO did not appear to be in conformity with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. The budget of ITC was a section of the regular budget of the Organization and, as such, should be subject to those Regulations and Rules and to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

11. Furthermore, in response to the Advisory Committee, which recommended that the activities of the Centre should remain subject to internal audit and oversight by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, he wished to point out that the activities of ITC were approved by the Member States and that only the competent legislative organs of the United Nations could change them. The Office of Internal Oversight Services did not have such powers but was merely mandated, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/218 B, to examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates.

12. Accordingly, the Group of 77 and China called for the restoration of the administrative and budgetary arrangements for ITC and reaffirmed the role of UNCTAD in that regard. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China had, moreover, recently reiterated that position of principle.

Agenda item 143: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Support account (*continued*) (A/52/837 and Corr.1 and A/52/892; A/53/418)

Death and disability benefits (*continued*) (A/C.5/53/16)

13. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), recalling that the General Assembly, in resolution 51/239 A, had requested the Secretary-General to submit to it quarterly reports on the progress made in clearing the backlog of death and disability claims, introduced the fourth such report (A/C.5/53/16), which dealt with the period ending 30 June 1998. Annexes A, B and C to the report contained detailed information, which showed that 977 claims had been processed since May 1997 and that 90 claims still awaited processing. Those figures represented a considerable reduction compared with the 564 claims awaiting processing mentioned by the General Assembly in the aforementioned resolution. Since the issuance of the previous report, in March 1998, 100 new claims had been received and 100 had been processed.

14. In order to catch up with the backlog, the General Assembly had provided general temporary assistance resources funded from the support account. The situation had improved greatly as a result and the Secretary-General did not seek continuation of that assistance.

15. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that he regretted the delay in the issuance of the Advisory Committee's report (A/53/418). He noted that, despite the observations of the Advisory Committee and of the General Assembly, the Secretariat had done little to improve the quality of information provided; future reports on the support account should take full account of General Assembly resolutions and the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

16. The Group attached great importance to the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and

security. All mandated activities should be carried out by international civil servants in accordance with Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter, and all gratis personnel should be phased out by February 1999. The recruitment of staff to replace gratis personnel should be expedited with due regard for equitable geographical distribution. The developing countries were under-represented in the staffing structure of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

17. The Secretary-General had proposed 469 temporary support account posts for the period 1 July 1998–30 June 1999, and the General Assembly, in its resolution 51/239, had affirmed the need for adequate funding for the backstopping of peacekeeping operations, in view of which there was a need for the immediate conversion of positions occupied by gratis personnel to fully funded temporary posts. The Advisory Committee's recommendation for 47 additional posts and the redeployment of 29 posts would need to be considered on the basis of the actual requirements for backstopping. The Group of 77 and China would like additional information on the 29 posts proposed for redeployment. The Secretariat should inform the Committee of the feasibility of implementing the Advisory Committee's recommendations, should the General Assembly approve them, and indicate whether the amount of $34.4 million tentatively approved by the General Assembly for the period 1 July 1998–30 June 1999 would be sufficient.

18. The Advisory Committee had rightly pointed out the need to review the relationship between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs to avoid duplication and overlap, and to review any possible duplication between some functions performed by the Department of Management and the administration in the field as well as the planning functions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to avoid duplication between the Office of the Military Adviser and the Planning Division. As the Advisory Committee recommended, the cost-effectiveness of the Situation Centre, including its workload, functions and responsibilities, should be evaluated, and the Secretary-General should submit a separate report on the Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters to the General Assembly as soon as possible.

19. **Mr. Manz** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland and Norway, said that the European Union's contribution to peacekeeping (one third of peacekeeping personnel currently serving and almost 40 per cent of the budget) reflected its commitment to the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

20. It went without saying that everything had to be done to ensure the safety and welfare of personnel in the field. The most important means of doing so was to plan, accurately assess and analyse both operational and logistical aspects of peacekeeping activities. Accordingly, backstopping must function properly. Over the years the relevant departments had developed the necessary expertise to provide such support, owing in part to the expertise brought in by gratis military officers. The European Union had joined the consensus decision by the General Assembly to phase out gratis personnel, and stood by that decision.

21. In May 1998 the Advisory Committee had been unable to carry out a detailed assessment of the Secretary-General's proposals owing to a lack of time and incomplete information. The Fifth Committee had then adopted a decision to allow for urgent administrative measures, such as recruitment, to go ahead, with the intention of completing its work once it had additional guidance from the Advisory Committee. The Fifth Committee had done its utmost to signal to the Secretariat what type of information was needed. Yet ACABQ, whose efforts and clear conclusions were commendable, had indicated on several occasions in its reports that the clarifications it had sought, in some instances one or two years previously, had still not been provided. While some administrative units had been able to justify their needs in a plausible manner, others apparently had not. The Secretariat must explain that situation.

22. The European Union noted that the Advisory Committee's recommendations differed from the Secretary-General's proposals, and shared its scepticism as to the approach taken by the Secretariat and the quality of the staffing tables proposed. The European Union would carefully evaluate all recommendations submitted, although it obviously felt more strongly about some areas than others. Those priorities were consistent and well known. The Fifth Committee must adopt a balanced approach that would allow the Secretariat to maintain the seconded military and police personnel needed to effectively plan, deploy and manage peacekeeping operations. In the absence of the information requested, the Advisory Committee had had little choice but to adopt a pragmatic approach. It was thus of the greatest importance for the Secretariat to provide the necessary information at the current session.

23. Since the mechanism of redeployment of posts was to be used to resolve staffing problems, the Committee must have detailed information on when redeployment would take place, and where from, in order to be able to decide on the

proposal. Lastly, to avoid putting at risk backstopping capacities for peacekeeping as a result of vacancies, it was crucial not to impede the recruitment process, and for the Committee to take a speedy decision to meet the mandated deadline of 15 October 1998.

24. **Mr. Shervani** (India), recalling the conditions under which the support account had been created, noted that the overall budget for peacekeeping operations had declined considerably from the level of the early 1990s. Theoretically the number of backstopping personnel should fluctuate with the number and size of peacekeeping operations.

25. As his delegation had already indicated, backstopping for peacekeeping should take into account dynamics in the field, such as the decline in the number of troops and its impact on backstopping at Headquarters, the changing requirements of peacekeeping operations in the field and of Headquarters support, the possibility of duplication between the activities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other departments, and the structures and posts required in low and high intensity periods of activity.

26. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations, but noted that in some cases ACABQ had been unable to make explicit recommendations in the absence of information from the Secretariat. Perhaps the Secretariat could provide the necessary clarifications.

27. It was essential for peacekeeping operations to be properly financed. Unfortunately, there was an unwillingness on the part of some Member States to meet their commitments, hence the long delays in reimbursing amounts due to several countries, including India. In that context his delegation would prefer the Committee to strike an appropriate balance on the basis of realistic figures, and to consider post increases only in cases where they were properly justified by the Secretariat and duly recommended by the Advisory Committee.

28. To replace gratis personnel within the time-frame envisaged by the General Assembly the Secretariat needed to accelerate the recruitment process, but without affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations; acceptance of the judicious recommendations of the Advisory Committee could facilitate that task.

29. **Mr. Dausá Céspedes** (Cuba) said that his delegation associated itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and regretted that the Fifth Committee had not received all the information it needed. He emphasized that imposing certain resource levels arbitrarily, based on the political positions of certain Member States, or attempting to give preference to some regions over others undermined the credibility of the United Nations.

30. His delegation noted the emergence of practices which were distorting the budget process. It had been decided to use assessed contributions to finance the Lessons Learned Unit, when such activities should have been financed by voluntary contributions, and it was being proposed that the same approach should be taken with the Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters and that other support account activities should be financed from the regular budget.

31. His delegation noted that, in document A/52/837, the Secretariat had published vacancy announcements for all the posts concerned in order to facilitate the selection of candidates and ensure that gratis personnel were replaced on schedule. Cuba saw that as an exceptional procedure which must on no account create a precedent.

32. His delegation expected the Secretariat to provide a detailed analysis of the structure of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, with a view to streamlining it and avoiding overlapping, as recommended by General Assembly resolutions 50/214 and 52/220.

33. The Secretariat's proposal to convert 106 posts currently filled by gratis personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was not justified, but the Advisory Committee's recommendation for the creation of 47 posts and the redeployment of 29 others Secretariat-wide was inadequate. His delegation would like to hear the Secretariat's views on the potential implications of that recommendation for the departments concerned. It would also like the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to explain the figures given in paragraph 7 of the report, where it was stated that, as at 14 September 1998, there had been 23 vacant posts, including five posts under recruitment, meaning that, in practice, the number of vacant posts was only 18. The recommendation to fill by deployment the six military officer posts provided for the Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters also did not appear to be justified, given the observations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations reproduced in paragraph 15 of the Advisory Committee's report.

34. The Advisory Committee's recommendation to redeploy a P-4 post for the Investigation Section of the Office of Internal Oversight Services also appeared not to be justified, in that the General Assembly had decided, in its resolution 52/220, to create three new posts at the P-4/3 level for that Section, representing a 33 per cent increase over the biennium 1996–1997. Lastly, his delegation wished to know why the Advisory Committee was not

recommending the creation of the post requested for the Europe and Latin America Division.

35. **Mr. Suman** (Nepal), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on death and disability benefits (A/C.5/53/16), said that the current system of compensation should be continued. The General Assembly at its current session should emphasize the need to ensure adequate financial resources for the compensation of United Nations peacekeepers killed or wounded in the line of duty. A simplified claim procedure should be adopted, with an in-built mechanism for exchanges of information between the Permanent Missions and Secretariat departments concerned, with a view to the timely settlement of claims.

36. **Mr. Theophylactou** (Cyprus) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. He noted from the Secretary-General's report (A/52/837) that, while the number of troops had decreased since 1994, the number of support account posts had increased, and that the support account as a percentage of peacekeeping operations had increased from 0.8 per cent in 1994 to 5 per cent in 1998.

37. He paid tribute to all peacekeepers, military and civilian, especially those who had served or were currently serving under the United Nations flag in Cyprus, but expressed concern at the ever-increasing demand for peacekeeping operations and the modest financial resources assigned to them. His delegation hoped that the proposals currently under consideration would improve the financial situation in that regard.

38. The safety and welfare of peacekeeping personnel were also cause for concern. To that end, adequate funding and equipment must be supplied. His Government contributed voluntarily a substantial portion of the budget of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, whose peacekeeping and humanitarian role was praiseworthy.

39. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) noted with concern that, as the Advisory Committee stated in paragraph 5 of its report, the Secretariat had done little to improve the quality of the information which it provided on the support account. He commended the Advisory Committee for having nevertheless conducted a detailed study of the posts requested.

40. The deliberations on the support account were aimed at establishing the level of resources, including the number of posts, required for the backstopping of peacekeeping operations. The Advisory Committee had taken the correct approach to the issue, in that it had taken into account the need to streamline backstopping-related functions within the Secretariat and the current level of vacancies in support account posts. Its recommendations also took into account the provisions of paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution 52/248.

41. In order to maintain the backstopping functions of peacekeeping operations, it was critically important that gratis personnel should be replaced in a timely manner. In that connection, the Fifth Committee had been assured by the Secretariat that recruited candidates would receive official offers of appointment by the end of the year. His delegation would like to be informed of the situation in that regard.

42. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) endorsed the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The number of support account posts must be determined on the basis of the real needs of peacekeeping operations and the Advisory Committee was to be commended for having taken into account the decrease in such operations.

43. The Advisory Committee's recommendations were an excellent starting point for the Fifth Committee's consideration of the proposals concerning support account posts. His delegation welcomed the approach taken by the Advisory Committee to the creation of posts following the phasing out of gratis personnel. In particular, it subscribed to the Advisory Committee's comments in paragraphs 7 and 8 of its report and took note of the observations in paragraph 15 concerning the Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters. It would also like to receive clarification concerning the separate report announced by the Secretariat, to which the Advisory Committee referred in paragraph 12.

44. **Mr. Lozinski** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation shared the Advisory Committee's regret (A/53/418, para. 5) that little had been done since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/248 to improve the quality of information provided. He agreed with the Advisory Committee that a diminution in peacekeeping expenditures by more than two thirds must have an impact on staffing needs in support services. As a result of the fact that the Secretariat had not submitted the information requested on the division of responsibility between the various services and departments responsible for backstopping, the Fifth Committee would again be required to take a decision on an important mechanism without having enough time or information.

45. It was important for the Organization to have at its disposal the highly skilled specialized military personnel it needed to discharge one of its essential functions — peacekeeping — after gratis personnel had been phased out. His delegation was willing to accept the Advisory

Committee's recommendations, in particular those relating to redeployment of staff in an effort to avoid overlap.

46. The resolution on the support account must contain a specific provision recalling that at future sessions the Secretariat must submit detailed information justifying all posts to be funded from the support account, as well as other information requested by Member States, in a timely manner.

47. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Bangladesh attached great importance to the role played by the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, as indicated by its generous response to requests for troops. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment despite the difficulty Bangladesh had had in receiving reimbursement for its service.

48. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be provided with adequate resources to perform its functions, but there should also be adequate justification for its structure and staffing table. He noted the Advisory Committee's observation (A/53/418, paras. 3, 4 and 5) that the Secretariat had not presented meaningful workload statistics, or met the concerns expressed in General Assembly resolution 52/248 on the quality of information provided.

49. One of the purposes of reform of the United Nations was to eliminate duplication. However it was clear from the Advisory Committee's report that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was plagued by a fragmented approach, and that there was a duplication of functions between various departments involved in peacekeeping operations. As recommended by the Advisory Committee, there should be a thorough review of the structure and functions of the departments in question before the next report of the Secretary-General on the support account was submitted.

50. His delegation also supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation for the creation of an additional 47 support account posts and the redeployment of 29 posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other departments concerned. His delegation supported the phasing out of gratis personnel and their replacement by international civil servants, and was opposed to any arbitrary financial ceiling that might adversely affect backstopping of peacekeeping operations. With regard to the quarterly report on death and disability benefits (A/C.5/53/16), he noted, in connection with annex A, that Bangladesh had submitted 27 claims before May 1997, none of which had been settled. He requested clarification.

51. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) supported the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Recalling that peacekeeping was one of the Organization's central functions, he requested information on the recruitment status of staff intended to replace gratis personnel after 28 February 1999. His delegation noted that the Secretary-General, whose report had been submitted very late, had requested a total of 469 support account posts, representing requirements of US$ 39.4 million, whereas resolution 52/248 adopted by the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-second session had approved requirements of $34.4 million. His delegation would study carefully the Advisory Committee's recommendations in paragraph 67 of its report with other delegations.

52. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), responding to the representative of Bangladesh, undertook to provide the clarification requested regarding compensation claims in the very near future. With regard to the support account, information had been provided in document A/52/837 and thereafter. The Advisory Committee had, for example, received job descriptions for all posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The missions for which various Secretariat departments and services provided backstopping included not only ongoing or terminated missions for which the accounts had not yet been closed, but also possible operations that must be planned in case they were launched, and operations that might be expanded. The diminution in the overall level of operations had been matched by a fall in the number of posts occupied by gratis personnel and support account posts (down from 408 to 345, a reduction of some 16 per cent). Redeployment possibilities would be studied very carefully, but that was in any event a zero sum game, and it was not possible to continue resource reductions indefinitely. The approved amount of $34.4 million would probably be enough to meet requirements, since, until recruitment was finished, the vacancy rate would be slightly higher than anticipated.

53. **Mr. Wortel** (Office of Human Resources Management), responding to the representative of China, said that the Office of Human Resources Management had begun the recruitment process in consultation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. With regard to civilian personnel, 57 vacancy announcements had been issued at the end of June, and had elicited 3,500 applications; the Office had transmitted its pre-selected candidates to the Department. For military and police posts, 54 Member States had submitted 705 applications by the deadline, including those of 19 women. Other applications had been submitted after the deadline. The Office had transmitted pre-selected applications to the Department, which, noting that certain

Member States required more time to submit applications, in particular those of women, had asked the Office to extend the deadline for applications. Vacancy announcements would thus be re-issued in a note verbale to Member States, with 27 October 1998 as the new deadline.

54. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh) asked what would become of the applications submitted before the first deadline, and how the Department intended to explain the extension. He wished to know whether it was the first time deadlines for the submission of applications had been extended.

55. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) asked why applications had been accepted after the deadline had expired, and requested an assurance that the new deadline, which would allow the Secretariat only two months to complete its selection of candidates, would enable it to meet the recruitment schedule.

56. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) associated his delegation with the questions raised, and trusted that further applications by women would be received, and asked what the impact was of the new deadline on recruitment status.

57. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) asked whether the clarifications provided by the Controller and the Office of Human Resources Management could be provided in writing in informal consultations.

58. **Ms. Butschek** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed surprise at the setting of a new deadline, since the member countries of the European Union had made sure that they had respected the original deadline. In the debate on the phasing out of gratis personnel, the constant concern of the European Union had been to ensure a seamless transition. It was the strong desire of the European Union for there to be no further change in the schedule. She recalled in that regard that the European Union would not have joined the consensus on General Assembly resolution 52/234, in particular paragraph 9, if it had not received an assurance that recruitment would be expedited, and she reserved the right to return to the issue.

59. **Mr. Wortel** (Office of Human Resources Management) said that the applications already received had been pre-selected and would be considered together with those to be pre-selected from the new applications. The overall schedule should not alter. The information given earlier would be provided in writing to the Committee in informal consultations, as requested by the representative of Algeria.

60. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations would reply to other questions raised, in particular those put by the representative of Austria.

61. **Mr. Saha** (India), observing that the Permanent Mission of India had submitted the names of candidates to the Secretariat before and after the deadline and those sent after had been refused, asked what procedures the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management were following.

62. **Mr. Wortel** (Office of Human Resources Management), replying to the representative of India, said that the Secretariat had not initially made provision for the receipt of applications from Member States after the deadline. All applications received by the Secretariat before the expiry of the new deadline would be accepted.

63. **Ms. Butschek** (Austria) asked when the Department of Peacekeeping Operations could provide the information requested.

64. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) said that his delegation had two concerns: would the necessary recruitments be completed before the deadline set by the General Assembly and would all Member States be treated on an equal footing?

65. **Mr. Wortel** (Office of Human Resources Management) confirmed that the Office hoped to be able to abide by the deadline of 28 February 1999. The candidates selected by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would be approved by the competent bodies on the basis of the Department's needs, and then their files would be transmitted to the Office of Human Resources Management.

66. **Mr. Abdullah** (Yemen), endorsing the comments made by the representative of China, said that the recruitment procedures should be transparent and equitable. In addition, account should be taken of the under-representation of some countries.

67. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should recommend that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General on death and disability benefits in document A/C.5/53/16.

68. *It was so decided.*

69. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia) said that he was not opposed to the decision which the Committee had just adopted but wished to draw attention to the fact that Indonesia had submitted a number of requests for compensation which had still not been settled.

Agenda item 113: Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999 (*continued*)

Analysis of savings resulting from the improved overall cost-effectiveness achieved pursuant to the ninth session of UNCTAD (*continued*) (A/52/898 and Corr.1; A/53/7/Add.2)

70. **Mr. Herawan** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that unfortunately, owing to the late issuance of the Secretary-General's report, the Committee had been unable, during the resumed fifty-second session, to take the action requested by the General Assembly in resolution A/52/220 and that the number of expert meetings had been reduced from 14 to 10. The Group supported the proposal that the number of experts should be increased in return for that reduction. In order not to jeopardize the work of UNCTAD, it was essential to take a prompt decision on the utilization of the amount of $5,526,600 specified by the General Assembly in its decision 52/462.

71. The agreed statement issued by the Chairman of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget of UNCTAD stated that the needs of developing countries, especially the least developed among them, must be given special consideration. Given the importance of the participation of experts from the developing countries in UNCTAD meetings, and in order to redress the current imbalance benefiting the developed countries, the Group of 77 and China emphasized that experts from the former should be the sole beneficiaries of the proposal on the financing of expert meetings. They doubted whether the substantial resources allocated to the financing of consultants was justified and would like to be informed whether the activities assigned to consultants could be carried out by UNCTAD staff.

72. The Secretariat had informed the Advisory Committee that the reduction in the conference-servicing requirements attributable to the decisions taken at the ninth session of UNCTAD was responsible for savings of $2 million. Unfortunately, there was no mention of that amount in the Secretary-General's report. Furthermore, it was unacceptable that the Secretariat should state that no savings had resulted from the restructuring exercise. The Group of 77 and China regretted that the Secretariat report did not contain the information requested by the General Assembly in section III, paragraphs 52 and 54, of resolution 52/220. Since, according to the comments of the Working Party, the savings achieved as a result of the decisions taken at the ninth session of UNCTAD were significant, they urged that the Secretariat should submit them promptly to the Assembly.

73. **Mr. Matute** (Peru) associated himself with the comments made on the behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The savings achieved should help to finance the participation of experts from developing countries in the UNCTAD meetings, whose outcomes should adequately reflect their points of view.

74. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), speaking with reference to paragraph 12 of document A/52/898, said that the planned activities were self-contained and could not be carried out with the current staffing resources alone. As they were of limited duration, it was more economical to call on consultants than to recruit additional staff.

Agenda item 112: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 119: Human resources management (*continued*)

Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities (*continued*) (A/53/417; A/C.5/52/54/Rev.1 and A/C.5/52/56)

75. **Mr. Herawan** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Secretariat staff should have been recruited in accordance with the provisions of Articles 97, 100 and 101 of the Charter and asked whether resolutions 51/243, 52/234 and 52/248 had been fully implemented. Noting with concern that the practice of using gratis personnel had resulted in a geographical imbalance in some departments, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Group of 77 and China emphasized that the practice should not be used to compensate for poor personnel planning or a lack of staff resources. Nor should the object be to leave vacant authorized posts required for the implementation of mandated programmes. It was gratifying to learn that the number of gratis personnel had declined from 256 at the end of 1997 to 175 in June 1998. However, in paragraph 7 of its report (A/53/417), the Advisory Committee stated that the quarterly reports of the Secretariat failed to demonstrate the extent to which the gratis personnel provided the very specialized expertise required by paragraph 4 (a) of resolution 51/243. In March 1997, the Advisory Committee had stated through its Chairman, that that type of expertise was necessary in particular for sea and airlift operations, an observation which the Secretariat should note.

76. The Group of 77 and China viewed with concern the Advisory Committee's comments in paragraph 8 of its report in respect of the international tribunals for Rwanda and the

former Yugoslavia. They underlined that future quarterly reports should fully comply with the provisions of paragraph 14 of resolution 52/234 and the recommendation in paragraph 9 of the ACABQ report. They had noted the information on the recruitment procedures used by the Secretariat to replace gratis personnel, and they underscored that the process should be completed by 28 February 1999 at the latest.

77. **Mr. Wortel** (Office of Human Resources Management) said that the Secretariat had taken note of the requests which had been made to it concerning the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. In view of the considerable number of posts that had been approved, it hoped to be able to phase out the use of gratis personnel altogether.

Agenda item 118: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/C.5/53/21 and 22)

78. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to two letters which had been addressed to him by the President of the General Assembly and in which the Permanent Representative of Georgia and the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau respectively requested an exception to the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations. Rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly stipulated that the Committee on Contributions should advise the General Assembly on the action to be taken with regard to the application of Article 19 of the Charter, but the Committee on Contributions had met in June, before the requests for an exception had been made. He invited the members of the Committee to state their positions on the procedure to be followed.

79. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the reason for the request of his Government — which sought an exception for a few months only — was a conflict which had broken out in June, at the time the Committee on Contributions was meeting. It had therefore been impossible to bring the matter to the Committee's attention in time. He noted that the role of the Committee, as defined in rule 160 of the rules of procedure, was confined to advising the General Assembly. In accordance with the second sentence of Article 19 of the Charter, which he read out, the Assembly had sovereign power in the matter and could therefore accede to the request submitted to it without the request going through the Committee on Contributions.

80. **Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) said he thought that Guinea-Bissau's request was fully justified since the administrative and banking machinery had been completely blocked for several months. The Committee should consider what arrangements should be made to settle such cases of *force majeure*. One solution would perhaps be for the Committee on Contributions to meet twice a year to consider situations of that kind.

81. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States and the member countries of ECOWAS, supported the request submitted by Guinea-Bissau.

82. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia) said he was ready to take any decision which the Committee might feel it should adopt.

83. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) agreed with the representative of Egypt that it was important to decide on the procedure to be followed, in view of the provisions of rule 160 of the rules of procedure. In the case in point, the Committee should exercise caution.

84. **Ms. Achouri** (Tunisia) suggested that, since the request was for a fixed period and was prompted by a case of *force majeure* which had occurred after the session of the Committee on Contributions, it should be acceded to without prejudice to rule 160 of the rules of procedure and Article 19 of the Charter.

85. **Mr. Elmontasser** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) subscribed to the views expressed by previous speakers and supported the request of Guinea-Bissau.

86. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba) supported the request of Guinea-Bissau, but thought that the Committee should consider the matter and adopt specific provisions when it came to consider the report of the Committee on Contributions.

87. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said he thought that the Committee should accede to the request of Guinea-Bissau but without creating a precedent that would run counter to rule 160 of the rules of procedure. He proposed that the Committee should submit to the General Assembly a draft decision which would read: "The General Assembly, without prejudice to Article 19 of the Charter and rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, (a) Decides to grant a temporary waiver for a period of three months beginning [date of adoption] 1998 to Georgia and Guinea-Bissau; (b) Requests the Committee on Contributions to review the cases of Georgia and Guinea-Bissau at its next session."

88. **Mr. Orr** (Canada), supported by **Mr. Thorne** (United Kingdom), supported the Ugandan proposal and expressed the view that it was important to define the procedure to be followed in situations of that kind.

89. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should adopt the draft decision proposed by the representative of Uganda and revert to the matter when it came to consider the report of the Committee on Contributions.

90. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) said that, while he was not against the proposal which had just been made, he hoped that the Committee would wait until the next formal meeting to take a decision.

91. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that, while he respected the position of the Chinese delegation, he nevertheless hoped that the Committee would take a decision immediately.

92. **Mr. Fall** (Senegal) supported the representative of Guinea-Bissau unreservedly and invited the Committee to adopt the compromise solution proposed by the representative of Uganda.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m. and resumed at 1.10 p.m.

93. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft decision which had been read out.

94. *It was so decided.*

95. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) said that his delegation, which had joined in the consensus, hoped that, in order to avoid further technical difficulties, the Committee would set out the precise rules to be followed in such cases.

96. **Mr. Armitage** (Australia) said that, while his delegation had joined in the consensus, it believed that, notwithstanding the powers invested in the General Assembly, which no one contested, it would be preferable to obtain the advice of the Committee on Contributions. The latter should be invited to define objective criteria.

97. **Mr. Saha** (India) said that the power to take decisions lay with the General Assembly and that the main purpose of the rules of procedure, which could be modified, was to guide the decisions of Member States.

98. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) expressed warm appreciation to delegations for their decision. As soon as the efforts undertaken to put an end to the conflicts were successful, Guinea-Bissau would be in a better position to discharge its arrears.

99. **Mr. Schlesinger** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said it was essential that the Committee should study the arrangements to be made in the future. He agreed with other delegations that the appropriate time to do so would be when the Committee came to consider the report of the Committee on Contributions.

100. **The Chairman** said that the decision would be issued as a document of the Committee and invited the Rapporteur to inform the General Assembly as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.